

She and Allan *By Sir H. Rider Haggard*

CHAPTER IV. (Continued)

The Lion and the Axe.

NOW in front of the gateway of the cattle kraal grew a big wild fig tree. Passing under this tree I saw that the gateway was quite securely closed. I started to go back, but had not stepped more than two or three paces when, in the bright moonlight, I saw the head of my smallest ox suddenly appear over the top of the wall. About this there would have been nothing particularly astonishing had it not been for the fact that this head belonged to a dead animal.

"What in the name of goodness," I began to myself, when my reflections were cut short by the appearance of another head, that of one of the biggest lions I ever saw, which had the ox by the throat, and with enormous strength was deliberately hoisting it over the wall. There was the brute within twelve feet of me, and, what is more, it saw me as I saw it and stopped still, holding the ox by the throat.

Although, of course, I was startled for a moment, by the time that I had the rifle to my shoulder I had little fear of the issue, unless, of course, there was a mis-fire, especially as the beast was so astonished that it remained quite still.

Then the unexpected happened, as it generally does in life, especially in hunting. I fired, but by misfortune the bullet struck the tip of the horn of that confounded ox, which tip at that moment fell in front of the spot on the lion's throat whereat half-unconsciously I had aimed. Result: the ball was turned, and departing at an angle just cut through the skin of the creature's neck, deeply enough to make it madder than all the haters in the world.

Dropping the ox, with a most terrific roar it came over the wall at me—I remember that there seemed to be yards of it—I mean of the lion—in front of which there appeared to be a cavern full of gleaming teeth.

I skipped back with much agility, also a little to one side, reflecting that Zikali's Great Medicine was, after all, not worth a curse. The lion landed on my side of the wall and reared itself upon its hind legs before getting to business, towering high above me but a little to my left. Then I saw a strange thing.

A shadow thrown by the moon flitted past me—all I noted of it was the shape of a great lifted axe, probably because the axe came first. The shadow fell, and with it another shadow, that of a lion's paw, dropped to the ground. Then there was a most awful noise of roaring, and wheeling round I saw such a fray as never I shall see again. A tall, grim, black man was fighting the great lion, that now lacked one paw, but still stood upon its hind legs, striking at him with the other.

The man, who was absolutely silent, dodged the blow and hit back with the axe, catching the beast upon the breast with such weight that it came to the ground in a lopsided fashion, since it had only one paw on which to light.

The axe flashed up again, and before the lion could recover itself or do anything else fell with a crash upon its skull, sinking deep into the head. After which all was over, for the beast's brain was cut in two.

"I am here at the appointed time," said Umslopogaga, for it was he, as with difficulty he dragged the axe from the lion's severed skull, "to find you watching by night, as it is reported that you always do."

"No," I retorted, for his tone irritated me, "you are late, Bulalo; the moon has been up some hours."

"I said that I would meet you on the night of the full moon, not at the rising of the moon."

"That is true," I replied, mollified. "And, at any rate, you came at a good moment."

"Yes," he answered, "though, as it happens in this light, the thing was easy to anyone who can handle an axe. Had it been darker the end might have been different. But, Macumazahn, you are not so clever as I thought, since otherwise you would not have come out against a lion with a toy like that," and he pointed to the little rifle in my hand.

"I did not know that there was a lion."

"That is why you are not so clever as I thought, since of one sort or another there is always a lion which wise men should be prepared to meet."

At that moment Hans arrived upon the scene, followed at a discreet distance by the wagon boys. "The Great Medicine of the Opener of Roads has worked well," was all he said.

"The great medicine of the Opener of Heads has worked better," remarked Umslopogaga, with a little laugh and pointing to his red axe. "But, Yellow Man, how comes it that you, who I have been told are cunning, watch your master so ill?"

"I was asleep," stammered Hans, indignantly.

"It matters little, Macumazahn," he said, with a shrug of his great shoulders, "for of this I am sure, that I have played my part with the People of the Axe and to stop among them would have meant my death, who am a man betrayed. What do I care who love none and have no children? Though it is true that I might have fled to Natal with the cattle and there have led a fat and easy life. But ease and plenty I do not desire who would live and fall as a warrior should. Never again, mayhap, shall I see the Ghost Mountain, where the wolves ravened and the old Witch sits in stone waiting for the world to die, or sleep in the town of the People of the Axe. What do I want with wives and oxen while I have

would not say, except that in the country whither we wandered he would fight a great fight and win much honor. Now Umslopogaga was by nature a fighting man, one who took a positive joy in battle, and, like a bold Norseman, seemed to think that thus only could a man decorously die. This amazed me, a peaceful person, who loved quiet and a home. Still, I gave way, partly to please him, partly because I hoped that we might discover something of interest, and still more because having once undertaken an enterprise my pride prompted me to see it through.

Now Zikali had told me that when we drew near to the great river we should come to a place on the edge of bush veld that ran

trunk we came across a queer Nomadic people, who seemed to live in movable grass huts, and to keep great herds of goat and long-tailed sheep. This folk ran away from us at first, but when they found we did them no harm became friendly and brought us offerings of milk, also of a kind of slug or caterpillar which they seemed to eat. Hans, who was a great master of different languages, discovered a tongue, or a mixture of tongues, in which he could make himself understood to some of them.

They told him that in their day they had never seen a white man, although their remote ancestors had known many of them. They added, however, that if we went on steadily toward the north for another seven days we should come to where a white man lived, one, they had heard, who had a long beard and killed animals with guns, as we did.

Encouraged by this intelligence we pushed forward, now travelling downhill out of the mists into a more genial country. At length we

"Where can they be?" I asked. "Asleep, Hans, I think," said Hans, and he was right. The whole population of the place was indulging in a noontide slumber.

At last we got so near to the house that I halted the wagon and descended to investigate. At this moment some one did appear, the sight of whom astonished me not a little, namely, a very striking-looking young woman. She was tall, handsome, with large dark eyes, good features, a rather pale complexion, and I think the saddest face that I ever saw. Evidently she had heard the noise of the wagon and had come out to see what it was, for she had nothing on her head, which was covered with thick hair of a raven blackness. Catching sight of the great Umslopogaga, with his gleaming axe, and of his savage looking bodyguard, she uttered an exclamation and not unnaturally turned to fly.

"It's all right," I sang out, emerging from behind the oxen, and in English, though before the words had left my lips I reflected that there was not the slightest reason to suppose that she would understand them. But to my surprise she, answered me in the same tongue, with a peculiar accent that was neither Scotch nor Irish:

"Thank you," she said, "I, sir, was frightened. Your friends look—here she stumbled for a word, then added, "terrocious."

I laughed at this composite adjective, and answered:

"Well, so they are in a way, though they will not harm you or me. But, young lady, tell me, can we outspan here? Perhaps your husband?"

"I have no husband; I have only a father, sir," and she sighed.

"Well, then, could I speak to your father? My name is Allan Quatermain, and I am making a journey of exploration."

"Yes, I will go and wake him. He

said is your name, unless I dreamed it, for it is one that I seem to have heard before," he exclaimed with a broad Scotch accent. "What in blazes brings you where no real white man has been for years? Well, I am glad enough to see you any way, for I am sick of half-bred Portuguese and niggers, and small and better girls, and gin and bad whiskey. Come in and have a drink."

"Thank you, Mr. Robertson—" "Captain Robertson," he interrupted. "Man, don't look astonished. You mightn't guess it, but I commanded a mail steamer once, and should like to hear myself called rightly again before I die."

"I beg your pardon—Captain Robertson, but myself I don't drink anything before sundown. However, if you have something to eat?"

"Oh, yes; Inez, she's my daughter, will find you a bit. Those men of yours," and he also looked doubtfully at Umslopogaga and his savage company, "will want food as well. I'll have a beast killed for them; they look as if they could eat it, horns and all. Where are my people? All asleep, I suppose, the hay lubbers. Wait a bit, I'll wake them up."

Going to the house, he snatched a great sjambok cut from hippopotamus hide, from a nail in the wall and ran toward the group of huts, roaring out the name Thomaso, also a string of oaths such as seamen use, mixed with others of a Portuguese variety. What happened there I could not see, because boughs were in the way, but presently I heard blows and screams, and caught sight of people, all dark-skinned, flying from the huts.

A little later a fat, half-breed man appeared with some other nondescript fellows and began to give directions about our oxen, also as to the killing of a calf.

Just then our host reappeared, puffing with his exertions, and declaring that he had stirred up the swine with a vengeance, in proof of which he pointed to the sjambok that was reddened with blood.

The captain led the way into his sitting room. It proved a queer kind of place, with rude furniture coated with strips of hide after the Boer fashion, and yet bearing a certain air of refinement, which was doubtless due to Inez, who, with the assistance of a native girl, was already engaged in setting the table. Thus there was a shelf with books, over which hung an ivory crucifix, which suggested that Inez was a Catholic. On the walls, too, were two good portraits and on the window ledge a jar full of flowers. Also the forks and spoons were silver, as were the mugs, and engraved with a tremendous coat of arms and a Portuguese motto.

Presently the food appeared, which was excellent and plentiful, and the captain, his daughter and I sat down and ate. Also I noted that he drank gin and water, an innocent looking beverage, but strong as he took it. It was offered to me, but, like Miss Inez, I preferred coffee.

During the meal and afterward while we smoked upon the veranda, I told them as much as I thought desirable of my plans. I said that I was engaged on a journey of exploration of the country beyond the Zambesi, and that having heard of this settlement, which, by the way, was called Strathmuller, after a place in far away Scotland, where the captain had passed his childhood, I had come here to inquire as to how to cross the great river and about other things.

The captain was interested, especially when I informed him that I was that same "Hunter Quatermain" of whom he had heard in past years, but told me that it would be impossible to take the wagon down into the low bushveld, which we could see on the horizon, as there all the oxen would die of the bite of the tsetse fly. I answered that I was aware of this, and proposed to try to make an arrangement to leave it in his charge till I returned.

"That might be managed, Mr. Quatermain," he answered. "But, man, will you ever return? They say there are queer folk living on the other side of the Zambesi, savage men who are cannibals. Amahagger, I think, they call them. It was they who in past years cleaned out all this country except a few river tribes who live in floating huts or on islands among the reeds, and that's why it is so empty. But

Continued on Page 10



"Then There Was a Most Awful Noise of Roaring, and Wheeling 'Round I Saw Such a Fray as Never I Shall See Again."

"Those who serve should never sleep," replied Umslopogaga, sternly. Then he turned and whistled, and behold! out of the long grass that grew at a little distance, emerged twelve great men, all of them bearing axes and wearing cloaks of hyena skins, who saluted me by raising their axes.

"Set a watch and skin me this beast by dawn. It will make us a mat," said Umslopogaga.

"Who are these?" I asked.

"A few picked warriors whom I brought with me."

Then we went to the wagon and spoke no more that night.

Next morning I told Umslopogaga of the visit I had received from the Induna of the King, who wished me to come to the royal kraal. He nodded and said:

"As it chanced, certain thieves attacked me on my journey, which is why one or two of my people remain behind who will never travel again. We made good play with those thieves, not one of them escaped," he added, grimly, "and their bodies we threw into a river where are many crocodiles. But their spears I brought away, and I think that they are such as the King's guard use. If so, his search for them will be long, since the fight took place where no man lives and we buried the shields and trappings."

That morning we trekked on fast, fearing lest a regiment searching for those "thieves" should strike and follow our spoor. As we went Umslopogaga told me that he had duly appointed Lousta and his wife, Monazi, to rule the tribe during his absence, an office which they accepted doubtfully.

I asked him whether he thought this wise. It had occurred to me since I made the suggestion that they might be unwilling to surrender power on his return, also that other domestic complications might ensue.

Inkosikaas, the groan-maker, and she is true to me?"

And he shook the ancient axe above his head so that the sun gleamed upon the curved blade and the hollow gouge or point at the back beyond the shaft socket.

"Where the Axe goes, there go the strength and virtue of the Axe, O Macumazahn."

"It is a strange weapon," I said.

"Aye, a strange and an ancient, forged far away, says Zikali, by a warrior wizard hundreds of years ago; a great fighter, who was also the first of smiths, and who sits in the Under-world waiting for it to return to his hand when its work is finished beneath the sun. That will be soon, since Zikali told me that I am the last Holder of the Axe."

"Did you, then, see the Opener of Roads?" I asked.

"Aye, I saw him. He it was who told me which way to go to escape from Zululand. Also he laughed when he heard how the flooded rivers brought you to my kraal, and sent you a message in which he said that the spirit of a snake had told him that you tried to throw the Great Medicine into a pool. This, he said, you must do no more, lest he should send another snake to stop you."

On we travelled from day to day, meeting with such difficulties and dangers as are common on roadless veld in Africa, but no more for the grass was good and there was plenty of game for meat. Indeed, here in the back regions of what is known as Portuguese South East Africa every sort of wild animal was so numerous that personally I wished we could turn our journey into a shooting expedition. But of this Umslopogaga would not hear. In fact, he was much more anxious to carry out our original purpose than myself.

When I asked him why, he answered because of something Zikali had told him. What this was he

down to the river where a white man lived, adding that he thought this white man was a "trek-Boer." This, I should explain, means a Dutchman who has travelled away from wherever he lived and made a home for himself in the wilderness.

Also after an inspection of his enchanted knuckle-bones he declared that something remarkable would happen to this man or his family while I was visiting him. Lastly, in that map he drew in the ashes, the details of which were so indelibly impressed upon my memory, he had shown me where I should find the dwelling of this white man.

Travelling by the sun and the compass I had trekked steadily in the exact direction that he indicated, to find that in this useful particular he was well named the "Opener of Roads," since always before me I found a practicable path, although to the right or the left it would not have been practicable. Also such tribes as we met proved of a friendly character, although perhaps the aspect of Umslopogaga and his fierce band, whom, rather irreverently, I named the Twelve Apostles, had some share in inducing this peaceful attitude.

So smooth was our progress and so well marked by water at certain intervals, that at last I came to the conclusion that we must be following some ancient road, which at a forgotten period of history had run from south to north or vice versa. Oh, rather, to be honest, it was the observant Hans who made this discovery from various indications which had escape my notice.

Passing over certain high, misty lands during the third week of our

saw far away a vast sea of bush veld which, as I guessed, must fringe the great Zambesi River. Moreover, Hans, whose eyes were those of a hawk, saw some buildings of a more or less civilized kind, which stood among trees by the side of a stream a mile or two on this side of the great belt of bush.

CHAPTER V.

Inez.

WE had sighted the house shortly after sunrise, and by midday we were there. It stood almost immediately beneath two great baobab trees. It was a thatched house with white-washed walls and a steep or veranda round it. Moreover, beyond it, at a little distance, were other houses, with wagon sheds, etc., and beyond and mixed up with these a number of native huts. Further on were considerable fields, with springing corn; also we saw herds of cattle grazing on the slopes. Evidently our white man was rich.

Umslopogaga surveyed the place with a soldier's eye and said to me: "This must be a peaceful country, Macumazahn, where no attack is feared, since of defences I see none."

"Yes," I answered, "why not, with a wilderness behind it and bush veld and a great river in front?"

"Men can cross rivers and travel through bush veld," he answered, and was silent.

Up to this time we had seen no one, although it might have been presumed that a wagon trekking toward the house was a sufficiently unusual sight to have attracted attention.

is asleep. Every one sleeps here at midday—except me," she said with another sigh.

"Why do you not follow their example?" I asked jocosely, for this young woman puzzled me, and I wanted to find out about her.

"Because I sleep little, sir, who think too much. There will be plenty of time to sleep soon for all of us, will there not?"

I stared at her, and then inquired her name, because I did not know what else to say.

"My name is Inez Robertson," she answered. "I will go to wake my father. Meanwhile please unyoke your oxen. They can feed with the others; they look as though they wanted rest, poor things."

"Inez Robertson," I thought to myself, "that's a queer combination. English father and Portuguese mother, I suppose. But what can an Englishman be doing in a place like this? If it had been a trek-Boer I should not have been surprised."

We had just got the oxen out of the yokes when a big, raw-boned, red-bearded, blue-eyed, roughly-clad man of about fifty years of age appeared from the house, yawning. I threw my eye over him as he advanced with a peculiar rolling gait. A drunkard who has once been a gentleman, I reflected to myself, for there was something peculiarly dissolute in his appearance, also one who has had to do with the sea, a diagnosis which proved very accurate.

"How do you do, Mr. Allan Quatermain, which I think my daughter